A

LETTER

To a PEER of the

Church of England

Clearing a Point, touched in a

SERMON

Preached at *CHESTER*, before His Moſt Sacred Majeſty, on the 28*th.* of *Auguſt.*

In anſwer to a Poſtſcript joyned unto the Anſwer to

NUBES TESTIUM.

Publiſhed with Allowance.

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A Letter to a Peer of the Church of England, clearing a Point, touch'd in a Sermon, preach'd at Chester, before his Most Sacred Majesty, on the 28th of August, in answer to a Post-script, joyn'd unto the Answer to Nubes Testium.

My Lord,

A Person of Honor having put in your Lordships Hands, the Sermon I preach'd on the Feast of S. *Augustin*, before his Majesty at *Chester*, towards the fuller resolving of a Doubt in Controversie, debated betwixt your Lordship and him, concerning the Authority of the Church: I conceived great Hopes, That so eminent a Doctor as the great S. *Augustin*; who alone speaks in it, as to the whole Drift, and (in most Places) the very Words, would soon put the Point out of Question, and beyond the possibility of a Doubt.

I found my Hopes disappointed few Days after, when I heard that your Lordship had taken along with you, to the perusing of that Sermon, this Prejudice slily insinuated by a Divine of the Church of *England*, That at the very Entrance I mistook S. *Augustin*, and back'd my Error by a Forgery, citing for S. *Augustin*'s Words a Sentence taken out of a Spurious Piece, disingenuously fathered upon him by me; but disowned by the Learned of all Parties, and evidently made out not to be his.

There came out within a Day or two after, an Answer to *Nubes Testium*, the Author whereof brings up the same Charge against me: Whom on that Account I imagine to be the Divine on whose Word your Lordship rely'd.

I conceive it then my Duty to clear my self to your Lordship, and to remove that scandal put upon me, on Design only to divert the Attention which S. *Augustin's* Authority would have challenged from all well-meaning Persons, to some Truths; that prove very uneasie to some People of that Church, which divided it self immediately from the Catholic Church, by meer Lay-Authority; erecting a new Altar, without the Consent of any Lawful Pastors; invading a new-moulded Ministry, without Succession, Mission, Character or Jurisdiction; and undermining one third Part of the Apostles Creed; to wit, All that concerns the Church of God; Her Authority, Her Unity, Her Sacraments.

'Tis not any private Design of vindicating my self, which moves me to write this Letter; for although the Charge of *Disingenuity and Forgery* be very heavy, yet some People's Pens as well as Tongues are no Slander, especially those in whom mighty Boasting and scurrilous Language betray equally their Silliness and Gall. As for my *charitable Monitor*, after I had been somewhat acquainted with his Humor, and found him (*p.* 21.) most judiciously condemning the Council of *Florence*; that is All the Eminent Men, and Learned Prelates, of the Greek and Latin Church, as *notoriously guilty either of Ignorance or Forgery*, tutoring *the Gentlemen of* France (*p.* 18.) that is, All that Clergy, the *Sorbon*, and other Universities of that Kingdom, slighting (*p.* 23.) S. *Optatus* of *Milevi*, one of the most valued Fathers of the fourth Age, as one that *little consider'd Scriptures or Fathers before him*, (*P.* 26.) pitying *such Writers as* Bellarmine, *&c.* I must own to your Lordship, that I took my self to be much oblig'd to him, for having placed me in such good Company. I shall not return him his own Coyn, 'tis far from my Nature,

Nature, farther from my Principles and Character.

He hath accus'd me to your Lordship, and since, in Print to the World, first of *Ignorance*, in saying, *I followed the Advice of S.* Augustin, *when I recommended my self to the most blessed Virgin's Intercession.*

Secondly, Of *Disingenuity*, in citing for it S. *Aug.* 35. *sermon de Sanctis.* As to the first, I could answer him fully in his own Method, by telling him *the most eminent Protestant Divines*, as Bishop *Montague*, Bishop *Forbes*, Dr. *Fuller*, *Thorndike*, &c. have owned that S. *Augustine* did teach and practice Invocation of Saints: But, because he seems to value himself at a far higher rate; to comply in Civility with his Humor, I will appeal to his own Verdict, and content my self with maintaining, That *the Church of* England *is condemned even by himself as guilty of Schism, for separating from the Church of* Rome, *on the Account of that Invocation of Saints, which was taught by S.* Augustin, *and all the Fathers of his Age, and the Precedent Century.* I hope this will clear me of the first Imputation.

This then is his final Verdict. *Had the Church of* Rome *staid here* (in the Practice and Doctrine of the Fathers of the Fourth and Fifth Century) *and not proceeded, so much farther in these things, I do not see that we could have broken Communion with them upon such an Account.* *Answer to* Nubes Testium, *c. 4. sect. 2. p. 50.*

Next, He owns the Fathers of the Fourth and Fifth Century, as Witnesses and Abettors of the following Practices of the Church of God in their respective Ages, cited by the Pious and Learned Author of *Nubes Testium* not excepted against in the least by him. (Which yet are such as the Church of *Rome* never taught or practised more;) wherefore by his own Confession, the Reformation stands Guilty of Schism, for Separating from her on that account.

"That Christian People did celebrate together the Memory of the Martyrs with a *Religious* Solemnity both to excite to an Imitation of them, and *that they might be Partakers of their Merits, and be assisted by their Prayers*; Aug. c. 20. c. 21. cont. Faust.

Dulia.

'ers; giving them an Honor of Love and *Fellowſhip*, ſuch 'as we ſhew to Holy Men yet alive: But ſo much the 'more devoutly, how much the more ſecurely. That 'they offered their Prayers to God, having their High 'Prieſt Jeſus——— But if they would alſo gain the Fa- 'vor of many, they were taught in Scripture, That thou- 'ſands of Thouſands aſſiſted before him: That whoever 'was in Affliction, had recourſe to them: Whoever was 'in Proſperity, betook himſelf likewiſe to them; The 'one, That he might find Relief; the other, To beg 'Continuance of his Happineſs. That Mothers praying 'for their Children *were heard*, the Martyrs being *the 'Helpers of their Prayers*, *moſt powerful Embaſſadors to God*. 'That one almoſt overcome with Temptations of the 'Fleſh, raiſed by Art Magic, beſought the Virgin *Mary*, 'To aſſiſt her in her moſt preſſing Danger, and was pre- 'ſently help'd.

Such as were ſhewed to S. Peter *and S.* Paul,

Act. 5. 15. 9. 30. 19. 12. 28. 9. Orig. l. 8. cont. Celſ.

S. Baſil. orat. in 40. Mart.

Nazi. orat. 18 in Cypr.

Niſſen. in or. de S. Theod.

'That others asked ſome Saints *peculiar Interceſſion* for 'ſome *certain Countries*, and owned their Safety to them; 'others call'd them in *as Advocates for their Failings*: 'That Addreſſes made to them by Faith, not as to Gods, 'but as to Holy Men, *who are beſeeched to pray to God for 'thoſe who addreſs themſelves to them*, *were granted*: That 'Gifts were brought in, in Acknowledgment of *Cures 'obtained*; ſome *hanging up Eyes*, *others Feet*, *others Hands*, 'made in Gold or Silver: That when their Names were re- 'hearſed *at the Altar*, 'twas not to pray for them, which 'would have been an Injury; but that, *We ought to com- 'mend our ſelves to their Prayers*: That whoever touched 'the Bone of a Martyr, was in ſome manner ſanctified by 'it, by Reaſon of a Bleſſing attending ſuch Bodies; that 'on this Account all deſired *to approach to the Sepulchre of* 'Martyrs, not doubting but that the Touching this, would 'be a Sanctification, and a Bleſſing to them; and took it 'for a great Favor *to take up the Duſt which did lay 'about their Monuments*, keeping it as a thing of High 'Eſteem; but deemed it a far greater and unexplicable 'Happineſs to touch the Relics, to *apply them to their Eyes*,

Ambroſ. de m. Cyprian. Theod. de cur. grac.

Aug. de verb. Apoſt. ſerm. 17. S. Baſil. in Pſ. 115.

'their

'*their Mouth, their Ears*, and to all their Senſes; and 'then *prayed to the Martyrs as if they were alive* and pre-'ſent, to make Interceſſion for them; that each Drop of 'their Blood, and ſmall Mark of their Martyrdom, *their* Naz. orat. in Jul. & 18. in Cypr. S. J. Chryſ. de S. Ignat. '*very Duſt, caſt out Devils and cured Diſeaſes*; that God 'favoured his Church with the Relics of Saints, to the 'End, (that beſides the leading Men to their Imitation) 'he might afford a ſecure Port, and ſet a Remedy againſt 'the Evil, which on all Sides infeſted Mankind.

'That 'twas *to the Saints*, whoſe Bodies were viſited, 'that Chriſtians came, and were ſent back full of Bleſſings. 'Such Bodies were not kept *each in their own Monuments*, 'but divided amongſt the Cities and Villages, as eſteemed '*the Preſervers of their Souls and Bodies*, who made uſe of 'their Interceſſion with God, and by them obtained Di-'vine Favors; nay, that they were tranſlated by all Chri-'ſtian Emperors from their former Monuments, *Biſhops* Hyer. cont. Vi-gil. '*carrying them on their Shoulders, repoſited in Veſſels of Gold*, 'the People making a Lane from Country to Country, 'of Quires ſinging the Praiſes of God, for them to paſs 'through: That on ſuch Occaſions, many by *touching the* 'Saints Garments were eaſed of their Infirmities, many 'Cured, *by the very Shadows of their Bodies*: Even Hand-'kerchiefs thrown upon their Relics, and immediately Ambroſ. ep. ad Marcell. 'demanded back, were bleſſed *with a Virtue of being An-'dote againſt any Diſtemper*. Thus God made the Duſt Aug. ſerm. 92. de diver. 'of the Dead highly beneficial to all.

All this Matter of Fact is owned by this nameleſs Gentleman, to which many other ſuch Authorities of the ſame Fathers, as unqueſtionable, may be added: As *that all fell* Ephrem. ſyr. in Thren. '*down* (*in Prayer*) *before our bleſſed Lady*, all implored 'her to free them from all Neceſſities, from all the Tem-'ptations of the Devil, *as their Recoveiler*; asked of her Naz. in frag. ch. pat. 'to admit their Prayers, and to grant that which they 'eſteemed the chiefeſt of all; That departing this Life, '*they might find her to be their Patron and Advocate unto* '*her Son*: That all Chriſtians deſired to be buried after Aug. de cura pro mor. 'Death, near ſome Monument of the Martyrs, that their

'Friends

'Friends remembring where they were laid, might by
'their Prayers recommend them to those Saints; as re-
Aug. in ep. 137. & 43. 'ceived into their Protection: That Christians piously took
'their recourse to Saints Monuments, or to particular
Hylar Arel. in vita S. Honor. 'Places, where they were honored, expecting *Miraculous*
'*Favors*, and going rather to some Saints than others to
S. Leo serm. in S. Pet. P. 'obtain *some kinds of Blessings.*

Now to joyn Issue with this Answerer; I challenge him to produce any Devotion paid to Saints, and allowed of in the Catholic, or (as he calls it) Roman Church, that reaches higher than this now cited out of *Nubes Testium*, and allowed of by this Answerer: Which because I know he cannot, and hath not yet attempted, I conclude that by his own Confession, The Church of *England* did Schismatically disunite it self from the Church of *Rome* on the Account of Invocation of Saints, which was used and advised by S. *Augustin*, and the Fathers of his Age, and of the other purest Primitive Ones, as it is now used in the Roman Church.

The second Head of his Accusation, is of *notorious Disingenuity*, in citing S. *Augustin*'s 35*th*. Sermon *de Sanctis*; and laying that Brat altogether illegitimate to S. *Augustin*. He borrows of *Alexandre natalis*, some Proofs of this Confident Assertion, and adds one of his own Contrivance: Then wonders at my *Egregious Cheat*; and supposing, I cannot but see *now* my great Error, minds me very gravely to undeceive the Members of my Church.

This is mighty boasting indeed! yet after all his learned Labor, I am as Ignorant as ever; he may wonder at my Dulness; but I dare appeal however to your Lordships unbyast Judgment, Whether my Answers to his weak Objections, render it not at least most probable, That S. *Augustin* was really the Author of that Sermon?

His first Objection runs thus; the Title, *A Sermon in the Feast of the Assumption, doth not agree at all to any thing that is near S.* Augustin's *time.*

If his Meaning be, That no Feast of the Assumption was kept in those days, 'tis true: But in the Name of Logic,

gic, What Consequence can be drawn thence? S. *Augustin's* 14*th.* Sermon *de Sanctis*, is allowed by all to be his genuine Work, the Title whereof, is *in the Feast of all Saints*; yet the Institution of that Feast was much later than that Sermon, which was made for, and preach'd in the Solemnity of a Virgin and Martyr. S. *Methodius* Bishop of *Patara*, or as others say *Lycia*, a Martyr in *Diocletians* Persecutions: *Amphilochius*, and S. *Cyril* made Orations on the Purification of the Blessed Virgin: Thomas *Baronius*, in his Annotations on the Martyrology, learnedly shews, This Feast begun to be solemnized long after, under *Justinian* the Emperor: So that 'tis as Judicious to draw an Argument from the Title prefixt to Sermons, as from an Index joyned to a Book.

But there is a far greater Mistake in this Objection, much to be wondred at, in so great a Pretender to Reading; as if *Feast, or Day of Assumption*, in the Writings of Antients, did almost ever signifie any thing else but the *Day of a Saints Death*. S. *Hierom*, or an Author of the same Age, S. *Hephonsus*, *William* Bishop of *Paris*, S. *Bernard*, and others writ Sermons on our Blessed Lady's *Assumption*; altho in those very Orations, we find they doubted of, or disbelieved her being Assumed in Body into Heaven. After all, it was in the first Ages piously believed by many, That our Blessed Lord's Mother enjoyed, in Body as well as Soul, Heavenly Bliss. The Sermon under S. *Mellion's* Name, is as full in this Point, as the most Pious Catholic Preachers could be at this Day; and if it be not his Genuine Work, it must be of some other Author nigh these Times, since it passed for his, even in the Fifth Century: And *Nicephorus* assures us, That *Juvenal* Patriarch of *Hierusalem* proved the Truth of this Mistery, as now believed in the Catholic Church, to have been received of very Antient Tradition, in the Presence of *Martian* the Emperor, in whose time was the Fourth General Council.

Secondly, He urges, That *the Divines of* Lovain *tell us; How in several Manuscripts this Sermon was intituled to* Fulbertus

bertus Carnotensis. Another Objection of as little Force as the Former; as if S. *Ambrose*, and S. *Peter Chrysologus*'s Sermons had not appeared in many Manuscripts under other Authors Names; he might have learned from *Alexandre Natalis*, a dozen at least of like Examples: And to instance in one, S. *Syncletica*'s Life, a Virgin of *Alexandria*, was undoubtedly written by *Athanasius*, yet many Antient Manuscripts intituled *Polycarp* the Anchoret to it.

Thirdly, *'Tis certain it was not writ by S.* Augustin, *or two hundred Years after him, from S.* Isidore *being quoted in it, who lived in the Beginning of the seventh Century: It is probable that it doth belong to* Fulbertus, *who lived not till past a thousand Years after Christ.* What he calls here *certain* is *unprobable*, and what he stiles *Probable* is *certainly False*. The Author of this Sermon tells us, That in his Time, no Author amongst the Latins could be found, who treating of our Blessed Ladies Death had been Positive, and Express. *Nec invenitur apud Latinos aliquis tractatorum de ejus morte quidpiam dixisse aperte.* Yet the most famous Historian of the sixth Age, S. *Gregory*, hath a most full Account of our Blessed Lady's Assumption, agreeing with the general Pious Opinion of it now received through the whole Catholic Church. This *Isidore* then must be at least four hundred Years antienter than our exact Antiquary supposes; and in all Probability antienter much than S. *Augustin* or S. *Hierom*, who (or one at least Contemporary with him) hath written fully and positively on this Subject. Many *Isidores* are known in the Church History before S. *Augustin*'s time; amongst which, one was martyr'd in *Diocletian*'s Persecution, Brother to that *Pienus* who was stiled the Second *Origen*: And all that is cited of *Isidore* here, is, that he doubted whether those Words of *Simeon*, *Luc.* 2. were to be understood of the Sword of the Spirit, or of Persecution, an obvious Doubt which S. *Epiphanius* had some Years before S. *Augustin*.

GG. Turon. l. 1. mirac.

Tuam ipsius animam pertransibit gladius, *Luc.* 2. Hær. 78.

His last Objection is, That *some Divines at* Lovain, *and some Benedictines at* Paris, *have rejected this Sermon as spurious.* I could answer in his own Phrase, That *Men of this Age*

Age are strangely set upon New Discoveries; but the Respect I ow to the learned and pious Labors of those Worthies, forbids me to pass them by so slightly. I answer then, That their Judgment might byas me, if the Authority of S. *Thomas*, in such Veneration with all Universities and Learned Men, whom they both own as their Master, did not sway more with one, who acknowledged this Sermon as S. *Augustin*'s own, and cited it as his Work, from whose Decision I will not swerve. But since this Gentleman values so much (the wiser he for it) those *Lovain*-Divines Censure; let me mind him, That they assert to S. *Augustin* the 18*th* Sermon *de Sanctis*, in which the Saint, after he hath begged of the Mother of God, That *having received his Vows, she would by her Prayers obtain Pardon for his Sins* &c. he concludes, *What we offer by you, let it by you be pardonable; what we ask with a faithful Mind, let it become acceptable; receive what we offer, return us what we ask:* —— *Holy* Mary, *succor the Miserable, help the Faint-Hearted, comfort the Weeping, pray for the People, interpose for the Clergy, intercede for the Devout Sex, let all experience your helping Hand, who celebrate your Holy Feast.* If this be not INVOCATION, what Name shall we bestow on it.

Sicut Augustinus in Sermone de Assumptione ipsius Virginis rationabiliter argumentatur.

I leave it now to your Decision, my Lord, whether I deserved from your Divine that Gross and Harsh Censure Of *guilty of a Cheat put upon his Majesty, of great Ignorance, of Notorious Disingenuity, Forgery, great Error, Egregious Cheat*, &c. somewhat rudely heaped in his charitable Admonition of half a Page? Till I know your Lordships Decision, all I can say to the Members of my Church, is, That I am more convinced than ever of what S. *Augustin* hath so long since pronounced, *That Pride is the Mother and Issue of all Heresies*, whose Votaries ever supply the want of Sense and Reason, with most insulting and scurrilous Language. Far be it from me, even to return the like, *We have no such Custom, neither hath the Church of God*: Truth would blush to be defended by such unwarrantable Arms, especially before a Judg of so

Augustin. cont. ep. fund. c. 6.

so much Prudence and Moderation as your Lordship, whose Censure I submit this Writing; whether it prove so favourable an one to me, as every one is apt to pretend a Title unto in his own Cause, or no; nothing shall be altered, in the due Respect owed to your Lordship. By

My Lord,

your Lordship's

Most Humble and

Obedient Servant,

Lewis Sabran, *Priest of the Society of Jesus.*

FINIS.